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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3742
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9287
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6181
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4216
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3067
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9758
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 3156
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2233
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0275
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 6731
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4610
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001053

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TIGER SUICIDE BOMBERS ASSASSINATE SRI
LANKA ARMY THIRD-IN-COMMAND NEAR COLOMBO AS TIGERS BRUSH
OFF PRESIDENT'S SECRET OFFER OF DIRECT TALKS

REF: A. COLOMBO 1047 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 661

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead. 1.4(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: At 7:45 AM on June 26, two
presumed-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
motorcycle-mounted suicide bombers killed Deputy Chief of
Staff of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Major General Parami
Kulathunga and three soldiers in Pannapitiya, a suburb
approximately 15 km from Colombo. Kulathunga was the third
ranking officer in the SLA. This is the second suicide
attack on Army leadership since April 25 when the Tigers
targeted Army Chief of Staff General Fonseka (ref B) (Note:
Gen. Fonseka is undergoing follow-up surgery in Singapore)
and falls on the heels of the LTTE's refusal to accept
ceasefire monitors from EU countries after September 1. We
have confirmed a press report that President Rajapaksa has
made a secret offer to the LTTE for direct talks, bypassing
the Norwegians. The suicide attack reinforces the
opportunism of the Tigers regardless of overtures for peace
talks by the Government of Sri Lanka or the influence of
international mediators. End summary.

Suicide Bombers on Motorbike

[1](#)2. (C) On June 26 at approximately 7:45 AM, two presumed-LTTE
suicide bombers riding a motorbike targeted the two-car
convoy in which the third-ranking officer in the Sri Lanka
Army (SLA) was riding to Army Headquarters in Colombo from
his home in the Panagoda Army Cantonment, killing the
commander and at least three soldiers at the Pannapitiya
Junction, approximately 15km southeast of Colombo. This
attack is the second suicide bombing close to Colombo since
April 25, when a female LTTE cadre disguised to be pregnant
unsuccessfully targeted SLA Commander General Fonseka at the
Army headquarters in Colombo, killing 11 others (ref B).

[1](#)3. (C) Major General Parami Kulathunga was the Deputy Chief
of Staff of the SLA and a 2003 graduate of the U.S. Army War
College. He served as the overall commander of the 51

Division in Jaffna in 2004-2005, and in the predominantly Tamil areas of Trincomalee, Mannar, and Vavuniya. In April 2005, Kulathunga participated in the joint-PACOM/Department of State funded South East Asia Symposium (SEAS).

¶4. (C) The pro-LTTE Tamilnet website reported June 26 that the suicide attack "comes in the wake of SLA Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) attacks targeting senior LTTE commanders in Vanni," indicating the Tigers may consider the attack a retaliation for the alleged-DPU assassination of Mannar Tiger commander Lt. Col. Mahenthii on June 10.

Questioning Norway's Role?

¶5. (C) On June 29, Norway and other Nordic SLMM members will meet to discuss their roles in the peace process in response to Tiger and GSL demands and the crumbling Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) (ref A). Tamilnet on June 25 paraphrased LTTE political wing leader S.P. Tamilselvan that a decision by Norway to suspend its monitoring role with the SLMM would seriously threaten the LTTE's commitment to the ceasefire.

¶6. (C) On June 24, the independent Daily Mirror quoted Defense Spokesman Minister Keheliya Rambukwella saying that the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) would not accept a Norwegian head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) because the Norwegians also facilitate the peace process. His comment came in response to the LTTE's June 21 assertion that it will not accept monitors from EU-member countries, including current SLMM head, Swede Ulf Henricsson. On June

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24, the LTTE extended the four-week deadline it imposed on Norway to remove monitors from EU countries until September ¶1. On June 23, the GSL rejected the LTTE's assertion that Norway must change the composition of the SLMM to remove EU nationals (ref A).

¶7. (C) In a June 26 phone call with the Ambassador, however, Foreign Secretary Palihakkara contended Rumbekwella had not stated the official government position and "might have been misquoted by the press." Peace Secretariat Head Palitha Kohona later told the Ambassador there had been no change in government policy.

LTTE Rejects Direct Talks with GSL

¶8. (C) The Sunday Leader, a frequent critic of the government, on June 25 claimed in a front-page story that on June 20 President Rajapaksa met with pro-LTTE Tamil newspaper Uthayan/Sudar Oli owner Saravanapavan and his editor Vidyakaran (who confirmed the meeting to pro-LTTE Tamilnet on June 25) requesting the two men take a message to LTTE political wing leader S.P. Tamilselvan. The President allegedly proposed that the GSL and Tigers halt all violence for a two-week confidence building period, and engage in direct talks without Norwegian facilitation. According to the Sunday Leader, the President pledged to contain the LTTE-breakaway Karuna group if the Tigers agreed.

¶9. (C) PAO and IO met with Saravanapavan and Vidyakaran on the afternoon of June 26. The two reiterated the details of the Sunday Leader story, claiming President Rajapaksa had called them to his office residence at Temple Trees on June 20 for a secret meeting that included several others, including Presidential Media Advisor Lucien Rajakarunanayake but no members of the Foreign Ministry or the Peace Secretariat. Saravanapavan and Vidyakaran presented PAO and

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IO with an email message response from Tamilselvan listing five pre-conditions for the LTTE to engage in talks with the

GSL. The message said the GSL must: cease violence against civilians; disarm paramilitaries and move them out of the North and East; stop assisting the Karuna faction in the abduction of children; stop the limited economic embargo on Jaffna; and create an environment of dignity conducive to talks. (Tamilselvan specifically mentioned the treatment the LTTE delegation received in the common arrivals lounge upon returning from Geneva, ref A.) The Uthayan chiefs said they had not yet passed Tamilselvan's letter to the President.

¶10. (C) A June 25 BBC report quoted LTTE peace secretariat head S. Pulidevan as saying: "There have been some attempts by the Mahinda Rajapaksa government to make direct links with the LTTE, sidelining the Norwegian facilitators, but we informed the Norwegians of our intention to keep them as our official channel."

Military Retaliation Imminent?

¶11. (C) GSL Peace Secretariat Deputy Ketesh Loganathan told Ambassador on June 26 that he expects military retaliation following the suicide attack, but that the Tigers would be prepared this time. As of a June 26 noontime meeting between DAT and Colombo military leadership, no immediate military response to the assassination was discussed. Both Foreign Secretary and Peace Secretariat Head Kohona told Ambassador

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that the issue would be discussed. As of 16:30 local time, there is no indication of GSL military action, and Pol FSN has heard the President is still meeting with his advisors.

¶12. (C) Embassy personnel reported cursory security checks in Colombo intensified June 26. However, RSO reported no incidents and the overall climate in the city appears to be

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business as usual.

Comment

¶13. (C) Comment. The suicide attack on the SLA third-in-command, coming on the heels of the President's overture to the LTTE for direct talks could signal either a Tiger rejection of negotiations or an attempt to force the President to accept the LTTE's pre-negotiation conditions. The GSL's failure to retaliate, at least thus far, may be linked to their attempt to restart negotiations. It could also be that the GSL will retaliate at a time of its own choosing. End comment.
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